New Communication Satellite

71. SHRI RAMASHRAYA PRASAD SINGH : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to set up a new communication satellite in place of IRS-1D;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government in this regard till now; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) to (c) The next second generation INSAT satellite (INSAT-2E) is expected to be launched in the second quarter of 1998. However, even after INSAT-2E is launched, further augmentation of the INSAT space segment would be necessary to fill up the loss of capacity due to INSAT-2D failure.

The possibility of in-orbit acquisition/lease of transponder capacity for use in the INSAT system is being actively pursued.

Ban on Recruitment

72. SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have given any instructions to the Departments to stop the special recruitment for SCs/STs;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government propose to re-consider the decision;

(d) whether any representations have been received by the Government in protest of the issue;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) the decision taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI S.R. BALASUBRAMONIYAN) : (a) and (b) The Government had been conducting special Recruitment Drives periodically to fill up the backlog of reservation for SCs/STs in direct recruitment. The Special Recruitment Drives were based on an instruction issued in 1989 which required "backlog" vacancies to be treated as a separate category to which the 50 per cent limit on reservation was considered inapplicable. The issue was examined in the context of a reference and it was found that the separate treatment of "backlog" vacancies was no longer legally permissible in view of the judgement of the 9-judge bench of the Supreme Court in the Indira Sawhney's case and the Special Recruitment Drives no longer legally feasible, as the total reservation including reservation for the OBCs cannot exceed 50 per cent. Accordingly, instruction had been issued to modify the 1989 orders.

(c) to (f) Representations have been received for withdrawal of the revised instructions. It has, however, not been found possible to accede to such requests in view of the law laid down by the Supreme Court as mentioned above.

Import of Liquid Fuel

73. SHRI SARAT PATTANAYAK :
SHRI V.K. RAGHAVAN :

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased the state:

(a) whether the Government propose to import liquefied natural gas for power generation in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the impact of the recent hike in prices of natural gas on generation of power in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) Yes, Sir. In order to meet the growing demand for natural gas in the power and other sectors, the Government has decided to make efforts to import LNG.

(b) The Government has approved the formation of a Joint Venture Company (JVC) with GAIL, ONGC, IOC and BPCL having a total equity of 50% and the balance to be given to financial institution and others. This JVC is exploring the possibilities of setting up LNG terminals of about 2.5 million tonnes per annum capacity each at Enore (T.N), Cochin (Kerala). Hazira/Dahej (Gujarat) and Mangalore (Karnataka).

(c) The recent increase in prices of natural gas is expected to increase the cost of generation of power.

Commonwealth Countries Meet

74. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Heads of Governments of Commonwealth Countries at their recent conference has agreed to launch a fund for South Asia;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the source of funds thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) A South Asia Regional Fund, the third in the series of regional investment funds established under the umbrella of the Commonwealth Private Investment Initiative, was launched at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting at Edinburgh on October 25, 1997. The Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) will manage the Fund. The Fund has been launched with an initial capitl of US $ 110 million. Funding shareholders comprise the CDC and investors from South Asia and South East Asia and the India Ocean Region; further amounts will be raised from institutional investors with a second closing in March 1998.

The Fund will make long term equity investments in companies across a broad range of economic and industrial sectors. This is expected to bring additional capital to private sector businesses and contribute to economic growth.

Deaths Reported During Delivery

75. KUMARI FRIDA TOPNO : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to State:

(a) the number of deaths of mothers-children reported during the time of delivery during each of the last three years, year-wise in the each State; and

(b) the steps being taken by the Government or proposed to be taken to provide proper medical facilities to such mother and children in the rural areas especially in the remote tribal villages?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY) : (a) and (b) There is no annual estimation of maternal and perinatal mortality in India. A latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS) conducted in 1992-93 provides the estimate of (i) Maternal Mortality Rates (MMR) as 437 per one lakh live births, confidence interval for this estimate is 334 to 540, and (ii) The Neonatal Mortality (neonatal mortality is death of new born from birth to first month of life) as 48.6 per thousand live births in the country.

Child Survival and Safe Motherhood (CSSM) Programme was started in August, 1992 with the objective of improving the health status of women and children and reducing maternal infant and child mortality rates. The package of service under the programme for children included-essential newborn care, immunisation for prevention of morbidity and mortality due to six vaccine preventable diseases, management of diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections and Vitamin A prophylaxis to prevent night blindness. For safe mother-hood, CSSM Programme envisaged ante-natal, natal and post natal care alongwith T T immunisation for prevention of tetanus in mothers and newborn, prevention and management of anemia, early identification of maternal complications, delivery by trained personnel, promotion of institutional deliveries, management of obstetric emergencies and birth spacing. The CSSM Programme ended with the Eighth Five Year Plan in 1996-97.

During the 9th Five Year Plan commencing in 1997-98, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India has launched a nation wide Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) Programme on 15th October, 1997 to further improve the health care services and delivery system aiming towards adolescents, mothers and children, by strengthening and expanding the infrastructure, inducting more skilled manpower providing essential drugs and equipments and referral services for the entire rural population. This programme has also made provision to give focussed attention to the tribal population through tribal projects.

Relation of Asian Countries

76. SHRI K.P. SINGH DEO : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to improve relations with the Asian Countries; and

(b) if so, the steps taken in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALIM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Government have taken steps to improve relations with all the neighbouring countries on the basis of five principles : *First*, with neighbours, India does not ask for reciprocity, but gives and accommodates in good faith and trust. *Second*, no South Asian country should allow its territory to be used against other countries of the region. *Third*, none will interfere in the internal affairs of another. *Fourth*, all South Asian countries must respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; and *finally*, they will settle all their disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations.

The Government have also given priority to working through the regional framework of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Prime Minister has met all his counterparts from neighbouring countries during the SAARC Summit at Male and has also had exchange of bilateral visits with some of them. Special mention can be